

Press Release

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Authority Adds Four to Staff

The Arkansas Science and Technology Authority (Authority) announced the recent addition of four professionals to its staff. They are: **Linda Louise Okiror**, Research Program Manager; **Michael R. Hipp**, Vice President Information Technology; **Julie (Charter) Welch**, Vice President Manufacturing Extension; and **Richard H. Kennedy**, Vice President EPSCoR.

"We are excited about these appointments and what it means to the State of Arkansas," John W. Ahlen, president of the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority, said.

The Authority (or ASTA) serves as a statewide funding resource for high quality scientific and technological projects. The Authority endeavors to bring the benefits of science and technology to the people and state of Arkansas through scientific research, technology development, business innovation, and education.

Okiror comes to the Authority from the Medical College of Wisconsin, where she served as a research program coordinator. Prior to that, she was business manager for the with the American School of Niamey, Republic of Nigeria. Prior to Niamey, she was with the Medical College of Wisconsin as a research grants coordinator.

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As a business manager, she assisted in budget development and annual funding requests to the U.S. Department of State, monitored budget implementation, and prepared budget reports. Okiror also served as a liaison to local government officials, foreign embassies, local and international banks and businesses, and research medical facilities.

Okiror holds a Master's and Ph.D. in Crop Physiology from the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minn. She also holds a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision of International and Overseas Schools from Trenton State College, Trenton, NJ.

Okiror has been affiliated with: the American Society of Agronomy, Plant Physiology Society of America; Beta Beta Beta Honor Society; Gamma Sigma Delta Honor Society and the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

As Research Program Manager, Okiror will manage federal grant and assistance programs, recommend policies and procedures, evaluate the potential of a given technology, coordinate with other state and federal agencies, and manage and monitor the business and technology assistance programs.

Okiror replaces Welch, who has been selected to oversee the Arkansas Manufacturing Extension Network.

Welch is an industrial engineer who has worked for the Authority since 1992. During that time she served as the Research Program Manager while also researching and planning the manufacturing extension network.

Prior to working with the Authority, Welch served as: a finance officer for the Arkansas Department of Higher Education in 1991 to 1992; a manufacturing engineer for Kenworth Truck Manufacturing Co. of Seattle, WA in 1990; an industrial engineer for Technical Marketing and Research/Engineering at General Dynamics Corporation of Fort Worth, TX from 1987 to 1990; and as associate engineer in Research/Engineering of General Dynamics in 1986 and 1987.

Welch earned a B.S. in industrial engineering from the University of Arkansas,

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Fayetteville in 1986, and is a member of the Institute of Industrial Engineers and the National Coalition for Advanced Manufacturing.

As Vice President Manufacturing Extension, a newly-created position, Welch will oversee the implementation of the statewide network to support the manufacturing industry through coordination of existing resources and the establishment of regionally-based field engineers.

Kennedy replaces Danny Lattin as Vice President for the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR).

Kennedy is an associate professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology in the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS). In addition to teaching at the College, he is actively involved in numerous research projects, including collaborative programs in the Departments of Medicine, Anesthesiology, Pathology and Surgery. His area of scientific expertise is cardiac pharmacology and physiology.

Kennedy holds a B.S. in pharmacy from St. Louis College of Pharmacy and a Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. After completing postdoctoral training at Michigan State University in 1984, he came to Arkansas as an instructor in Pharmacology at UAMS.

He has been recognized for academic accomplishments, including: the St. Louis College of Pharmacy Alumni and Rho Chi Awards; the Merck Pharmacology and St. Louis Pharmacists Association Awards; the Maude Hammond Fling Fellowship at the University of Nebraska; and a Research Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health.

In the half-time position with the Authority, Kennedy is responsible for the management of all Arkansas EPSCoR programs which include grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Defense (DoD), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). He coordinates the submission of all new proposals for EPSCoR funding and is responsible for preparation and submission of all EPSCoR agency reporting requirements.

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Hipp assumes another new position at the Authority, that of Vice President Information Technology.

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Prior to joining the Authority, Hipp worked for 12 years as an engineer and manager for The Dow Chemical Co. of Freeport, TX, serving most recently as manager of the Global Workstation Support Center. During his tenure with Dow Hipp was ranked among the top five percent of all employees, was number two for job performance in a department of 30 employees during his first year with the company, earning the number one ranking his second year.

Other positions with Dow included: network planning supervisor from 1989 to 1993; network services supervisor from 1986 to 1989; telecommunications engineer from 1985 to 1986; and as a process control engineer from 1983 to 1985.

A native of Arkansas, Hipp also worked for Evans Engineers, Inc. of Heber Springs as a design engineer, and for the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville as a computer systems technician.

Hipp holds a B.S. in electrical engineering from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and received additional training in facilitative leadership, management essentials, statistical quality control, capital projects and contracting procedures, and document creation and retention skills.

As Vice President Information Technology, Hipp is responsible for strategic planning directed toward improving the state's telecommunications and information technology infrastructure. Key activities include assisting the Governor's Telecommunications and Information Technology Advisory Board in it's role of advising the Governor and preparing strategic plans. Assistance is also provided to other state agencies, public institutions, boards, commissions and legislative committees in their efforts to utilize or guide the utilization of telecommunications technology.

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